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**Blue Cross
Blue Shield
Blue Care Network
of Michigan**



TO: House Education Committee Members

FROM: Mark Cook, Vice President of Governmental Affairs

DATE: March 22, 2006

SUBJECT: House Bill 4375 – Suicide and Depression Prevention and Awareness

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM) supports House Bill 4375 and the legislature's effort to raise awareness on the serious issues of suicide and depression. As committee members consider this legislation, BCBSM would like to take this opportunity to share information related to the company's Social Mission Health Initiatives involving Depression Awareness & Treatment.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people in Michigan, according to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Between the years 1999-2002, 583 Michigan youngsters age 10-24 died by their own hand. BCBSM has an ongoing commitment to raise Michigan residents' awareness of depression and its treatment and to helping direct those in need to sources of care.

BCBSM and Blue Care Network (BCN) are currently sponsoring 17 grants to school districts and community-based groups to reach up to 15,000 Michigan teens, elderly and new and expectant mothers on how to better understand and deal with the debilitating medical conditions associated with depression. These grants will fund programs through 2006 and early 2007. Last year, 14 similar grants helped up to 10,000 school-age youths, their parents and teachers and more than 9,000 senior citizens in Michigan understand and combat depression. An example of one of the funded programs from 2005 was in Ogemaw County where a school district-wide awareness campaign taught students how to deal with depression, and trained more than 200 educators and social workers to better identify the condition.

In addition to sponsoring these grants, thousands of Michigan stakeholders in school and healthcare settings received a youth-themed issue of *Advancing Suicide Prevention*. This professional publication goes to 20,000 health policy leaders across the country. Funding from BCBSM and BCN expanded this core circulation by 5,000 additional professionals throughout the state. The targeted professionals include school and university administrators and deans of students, school boards, school psychologists, social workers in school and hospital settings, municipal leaders, and other professionals throughout Michigan. These leaders and "gatekeepers" can influence youth and policies affecting their well-being. This youth issue of *Advancing Suicide Prevention* magazine focuses on the crisis of

suicide among youth populations, the role of schools, and issues that impede treatment of suicidal youths. A copy of this issue of *Advancing Suicide Prevention* magazine and its accompanying materials are attached.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to express BCBSM's support for House Bill 4375 and also to share with you some of the many ways BCBSM is seeking to promote prevention and education of suicide and depression.